



# **RATE OF FIRE**

**The Newsletter of the Paddington Bears ASL Club**



**Issue 20**

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# *Rate of Fire*

*The Newsletter of the Paddington Bears ASL Club*

This newsletter is dedicated to the play of Advanced Squad Leader, and the players and news of the ASL community in Australia.

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I would also encourage players everywhere to take several copies to local game stores to be provided Free of Charge to any interested gamers.

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To make a submission, email your piece to me with minimum formatting. I will return with comments any item I feel needs more work. Otherwise I will edit as appropriate and include it in the next appropriate issue.

From time to time I will request players to write articles for the newsletter. Please consider these as "my last editorial demand" to paraphrase a famous German leader.

**The Editor**

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## From the Editor

Another tournament, another issue of Rate of Fire - the 20th in a noble lineage of the family. It must be nearly 10 years since this newsletter first started. So, time for a first - the first guest editorial ever. I hope it makes a change from my own rantings.

I must apologise for the delay in the production of this issue. Hitch number one was the delay in receiving material from contributors which effectively ruled out production for SAGA. The next hitch was an email bomb to the editor's PC courtesy of some haXXor somewhere which reduced the machine to a broken conscript and necessitated a slow rebuilding and re-installation of software. Thankfully the articles had been backed up, but even so....

The Captain.

# Guest Editorial

by Matt Cicero

It's Friday evening and you're home from work/school/camp/vacation/jail and you're starting to think about the weekend. Sure, you might have a few chores to take care of (depending on your marital status) but its looking like at least one afternoon will be free for some...personal time. So why is it that one of the first 3 things you think of doing involves ASL? Maybe you're looking forward to reading the latest Journal. Perhaps it's a game of Solitaire ASL. Maybe it's a VASL game you've been dying to get back to with that guy from Bavaria. Possibly, it's a chance to get in another CG Day in your Tarawa team-CG.

You choose ASL. Why ASL? I mean the rules are so thick you need 3 weeks to read them through once. The rules are so dense and convoluted you need to make notes while you read them. It takes hours to play. It requires hundreds of dollars of stuff. It takes up more shelf space than a big-screen TV. It requires a magnifying glass to read the darnn counters. Spouses/Partners/One-Night-Stands seem to have little or no interest in the game. And traditionally, if you do overcome these hurdles, you need to find someone else and convince him to hurdle with you in order to play a game! Sheesh! Why?

For me, the answer required some deep thought. When asked, I used to blurt out something to the effect that ASL is great because it is such an accurate historical simulation with incredible levels of detail. That's true. But that's not why I enjoy ASL so much. When it gets down to it, I think there are three reasons why I prefer to spend a free weekend afternoon playing ASL to many other activities:

## The Variety

You can play the same scenario 5 times and each

playing will be different. You can create 5 scenarios about the same event and each one is a new challenge. The unexpected is a regular event. You can change the rules to a certain extent by creating your own scenarios. Heck, how many games do you know allow you to recreate any land-based conflict in WWII...now THAT's variety!

## The Knowledge

I like to learn. Few activities require you to do as much learning as this one! Rulebook, module supplements, scenario cards, charts and an abundance of articles and newsletters all add up to a ton of information to absorb. Meanwhile, the game inspires you to look into other sources of information to fill in any missing background material or to gain a better appreciation of what the game is trying to simulate. Once you've plowed through all of that, you get to work that knowledge into some interesting skills...in the form of tactics during play and scenario design. I sometimes wonder if I've picked up a few courses at university about WWII, military tactics and memorization technique rather than a new hobby!

## The Friendships

So many different people play this game for so many different reasons. When you play ASL, you get a chance to meet them all and to build a common interest into some terrific new friendships. You get a chance to be part of a rather tight-knit community of folks all over the world. I think, way, way down... that's why I really enjoy ASL. It's all about the friendships.

*[Matt is the editor of 'Hit the Beach', the newsletter of ScCal (Southern California ASL club), operating out of LA. When asked to write this guest editorial for Rate of Fire, he gladly accepted. Another example of the ASL community in action. Thanks Matt. Ed.]*

# LENI RIEFENSTAHL'S LAST MOVIE

## RED BARRICADES AFTER ACTION REPORT

by Simon Mitchell



### In the beginning....

Ah yes, I remember those days of promise. A time before the first die were cast, when I considered fondly the engrossing nature of Red Barricades and the many hours of fun gaming it had provided. I thought, quite foolishly, that this game would be like the others. That is, a seesawing tussle of the juggernauts, a mix of cruel agony and delightful ecstasy, the battle lines waxing and waning on different fronts with the Russians gradually giving ground and, in the end, a tight battle for supremacy over the last of the factories and a fight that hangs in the balance until the bitter end.

Little did I know that Leni Riefenstahl\* had booked her ticket for the train to Stalingrad and she would

take only 4 days "Stalingrad time" (5 months Sydney time) to bring me to my knees.



### Russian Strategy

The initial Russian strategy was to create selected hard-point defences (lets call them "Blockhouses"), make them very tough obstacles and be prepared to give ground in other areas. It was hoped that the German would expend insufficient resources on the first encounter to take the block house, and then, on subsequent days, absorb more resources than it was worth as the fascination for taking a point of resistance takes its own life and character.

I also tailored my reinforcement purchases to coincide with a four day assault/ one day refit sequence in order to manage the ELR effect. By this I mean maximising the ELR mods for the refit phase check such that by day 3 & 4 you are purchasing ELR effective things. Dug in tanks are good for this as are elite infantry coys. Basically this plan calls for Line Coys, SAN and Fort to be purchased in the early days of the sequence and then Guards coys and dug in AFV's in the later part of the period.

When I was determining purchases my logic went something like this:

- a. purchase the maximum amount of infantry possible given purchase limits and the need for at least 1 point of FORT to gain max HIP.
- b. purchase support OBA (Btln Mtr)
- c. purchase at least 1 FORT (for HIP) but preferably more (Fort locs, ? & blockhouse support stuff eg mines)
- d. purchase SAN
- e. if left over points then go for dug in AFV's

Other elements I wished to maximise and take advantage of included the Russian sewer movement ability and their superiority in close combat. I figure the Russian needs to be sneaky and at times stubborn, with some areas of the factory complex to be contested viciously.

### General German Strategy

As a Russian player, the German strategy appeared

very simple. Purchase infantry coys, more infantry coys and then more infantry coys. Then form multiple firebases and have all the left over troops form multi-hex masses that surge across the board regardless of intervening obstacles. I almost felt like the roles had been reversed...

Oh, and don't forget to bring Leni....

## Day 1

Russian Purchases: SMG Coy R (3), SAN (1), Btl Mtr (1), Fort (3)

German Purchases: Line Coy (7), Line Coy (7)

# Turns: 7

Result: 30+ stone locs. German Victory

One of the things I like about playing the Russian is those pesky snipers and booby traps that harry the German player. Just about every dice role has an attendant risk and so I like bumping this factor up. A lot of dice get rolled in a RB game and I



think pushing up the SAN is great value for money (generally). So I payed the piper and took mine to SAN 5 expecting this to feature during the days play.

Little did I know that Leni had already set up the camera and filming had begun from the first moment. During the course of play on Day 1 I made 22 sniper checks and had only 1 (!) conversion and that was something ineffectual anyway. In fact, as it turned out, the German SAN 3 did more damage to me on a mere handful of checks....

The really frustrating thing from the Russian perspective was the German players rolling away, throwing caution to the wind, and 2FP / 4 FP+ 3 shots being taken with wild abandon. My advice to aspiring RB players is: don't, you wouldn't normally get away with it!

The Blockhouse: On the far left Russian flank is the first multi-level stone building the Germans encounter as they make their way down the board edge. I decided to make this my first blockhouse as it appeared to me to be an ideal lock-down point and solid hinge to my line. So what made it a block house? Well it had mines on the three hexes of direct

approach including the board edge, wire on the flanks to prohibit a sudden outflanking, fortified locs in one hex all the way to 2<sup>nd</sup> level, 45LL AT Gun, 6 x 1<sup>st</sup> Line squads, MMG and a 10-0 Commissar for last ditch rallying.

And it performed admirably up until the 4<sup>th</sup> Turn. Then in a single player turn the following happened, Leni was seen to set up the camera in the rubble opposite the blockhouse then,

1. The Russian AT Gun malfunctioned
2. The opposing German 16FP fire base went berko getting so many shots I lost count and it ran out of targets
3. The opposing German MkIIIIL Tank proceeded to get not 1 but 2 consecutive critical hits
4. Of those squads that survived the crits the remainder all failed their morale checks

So my fortress suddenly became a walk in the park with not a single good order MMC to oppose the German advance (this was particularly riling as I actually outnumbered the Germans that were involved in the attack!!). Leni's camera kept rolling....

On the same turn my C-in-C 9-1 leader went berserk, took a bunch of squads with him and they charged across open ground only to be shot to pieces. It is amazing the sort of hole something like this leaves in your line. So from turn 5, when I was winning the day, to turn 7 where my troops fell back on the left flank and centre, the Germans romped home. Worse, going to turn 7 meant that the German advance comprised my next line of defence in the factories for the following days play. Yuk.

## Day 2



Russian Purchases: Militia Coy OM(4), Line Coy OM(7), KV-1's D(2), Btl Mtr(1), Fort(1)  
German Purchases: HW Coy (9), Line Coy (7)

# Turns : 8 (yes, that's right – 8!)

Result: 27 stone locs + 2:1 casualty ratio. German Victory

This day Leni set her Camera up on the German left flank and glory rolls went to Herr Wiley just for a change. Actually if any broad comment can be made here regarding who Leni favoured throughout her tour of duty I would have to say she must have had a secret liaison with Herr Longworth back in Berlin because she spent most of her time in his sector. Perhaps they had an argument last night because today she had her camera on the edge of the factory complex and filmed the Nazi boys rolling up the hapless Russian factory workers. I could just imagine the Volk in the Workers Hall Cinema back in Berlin scoffing at the inept defence of their counterparts....

The local Commissar forgot to bring his rule book and set up the dug-in KV's in the factories (to try and create a hard-point of defence adjacent to a German forward offence building ideal for them to launch their next assault). Com Colby believed the rule stating that dug-in tanks can set up in Concealment Terrain (as it states in Chapter O) included factories, since they too are concealment terrain. German guidelines did allow for set-up in rubble but not, apparently, factories/buildings. It wasn't to really matter though as they performed dismally (I cant even recall a single hit) and one of them was destroyed by a "critical hit/ optimally placed" DC that didn't exist anyway. (The Germans had replenished the DC from day 1 even though they had no assault engineers in their OB.)

Heartbreak event of the day: during the refit phase I managed a snakes eyes on the leader roll for the line coy and had my own 10-2 super fire base which I HIP to protect from initial fire. However, on his first morale check he went heroic. On the following turn, on his next morale check, he failed a NMC and eventually lost the battle to stave his wounds....

Despite this it was an OK day but I still took too many casualties and lost my first factory in the centre. This was a case of setting up too strong on my left flank against Herr Longworth and a little too weak against the Germans on my right flank and they promptly took the Chemist shop and a foothold in the factory zone.

Perhaps worse than my casualties was my total inability to damage the enemy. Despite numerous opportunities throughout the days fighting, including -2 in the open shots and OBA braving German storm troopers, I failed to KIA any squads.

### Day 3

Russian Purchases: Line Coy OM (7), Line Coy R (4), Btl Mtr x2 (2), Fort (1)

German Purchases: Line Coy (7), Line Coy (7)

# Turns : 6

Result: 85+ stone locs + 2:1 casualty ratio. Germans Victory

Leni wasn't happy with the previous days carnage.



Not enough firepower was brought to bear to make for really spectacular footage of the supremacy of the German war machine. With the lack of casualties inflicted on my part, zero attrition

and the purchase of a further 2 line coys the Germans start the day with 8 HMG, 9 MMG, at least 7 LMG for more than 24 Mg's or over 120 FP's. They were able to set up fire base heaven.

This really precluded the ability to defend the entrance to factories but rather I set up largely one hex in, in the internal section of the factory, and waited for him to expose himself to +1 TEM. Of course, with Leni set up in the main factory complex today I could expect trouble here. And trouble I got. I knew things were looking tricky when Herr Longworth and Wiley created 4 Heroes in 2 turns between them.

Perhaps hardest to take was the abuse I received from the German players when I decided to fire my main firebase rather than run away at a critical moment of the day. Basically my choice involved either

- A. stand with the HMG in my fortified location and fight with a 20 flat shot to break up the German multihex fire group and have my only chance of multi rate of fire and perhaps save the factory OR
- B. in the movement phase take either a 36FP flat or -1 depending on how I moved.



Either way the only chance of survival really was to hope I could do something with the toughest thing I had on the board. The Germans seemed to be of the opinion that the only option was to run away. Anyway, you guys can probably guess the result, I rolled an 11, did nothing and return fire was below 5 and I was completely roasted in return. LENI !!!!! This led to a complete collapse in the centre but I took losses on all fronts and it was a horror day.

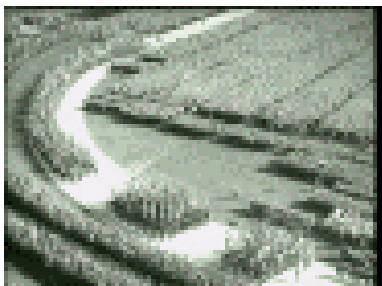
But perhaps not as bad as for the 10-0 Commissar who ended up killing 5.5 squads (13 failed rolls, only 1 rally) in the centre factory and almost single handedly managed to remove my defence. (Note that a Commissar rally in a factory is not that hard, for a broken factory militia squad, the hardest thing to rally, a rally of 8 will do the job, for 1<sup>st</sup> line it is 10 or less) I wonder if Leni needed a "Russian atrocity" scene for her movie because here it was....

#### Day 4

Russian Purchases: Gds SMG Coy OM (9), Line Coy R (4), Fort (1), T70's DI x2 (4)

German Purchases: Sturm Coy (9), Pz III's (4), Stukas (2)

# Turns : 4 – Campaign Conceded



Well today I had at least some pleasure: a set DC. And, believe it or not, it managed to bag a 9-2 leader, 3 x 4-6-8 squads and 3 x HMG, a juicy target in anyone's

language. It was after the dust had settled on the campaign that I realised this was the only real moment of joy for me in the campaign. I felt like I had played for 5 months straight without anything like it. There was the occasional KIA and so on, but I never had a period of sustained good luck like a multi rate of fire on a HMG causing mayhem, or a Berserker who actually survived DFF to go on and take or hold a building.

As my player morale was looking shaky I decided to take a stand in my second main Blockhouse. Today I defended the area with the majority of a elite SMG coy in the blockhouse, a couple of first and elite line squads and MMG in adjacent buildings, some

fortifications and 80mm OBA bombarding the street just outside the front door. But by now you guys probably know the drill....Leni was here and I was kidding myself if I thought this was tough.

As it turned out, I managed to break half of my elite troops which were sitting concealed in their blockhouse. Meanwhile the German Sturm troops, which at one stage were gaily dancing in the open ground and debris of the street under my OBA barrage, passed successive 1&2 MC and inched their way forward. The clincher for me came when the following occurred,

1. I failed numerous squad MC and routed them to a rear area of the blockhouse away from interdicting fire. I failed to rally any of the 3 broken 6-2-8/ 4-5-8 squads with my 9-1 leader on rolls requiring 6 or less.
2. Germans received their air support straight away on a roll of a "1" on turn 2.
3. Sighting task check of 7 no problem and one of the aircraft was used to put the broken stack back to DM status
4. I failed all 3 rally rolls again
5. The German player created a hero from one of the 5-4-8's dancing in the OBA and the hero ran through the other 3 surviving Russian 6-2-8's at point blank range through open ground surviving 5 x "-2" attacks
6. Another SMC, an 8-0 leader, did a similar although less dangerous run on the other side of the building
7. With no more fire options left to me, and the prospect of half my defence being destroyed in the rout phase due to the position of the 2 German SMC's and an inability to rout, I too failed my morale and conceded the campaign.... It was as if my fate were tied to the elite company in the blockhouse.

As I was packing up the game I noticed a curious thing, the pattern of the counters on the board around the blockhouse was identical to an armoured assault that the Germans had done on their right flank. Quite simply put, the 2 SMC's were used like tanks, causing a breakthrough and cutting rout paths, but then again if, Leni is filming, it isn't surprising the German soldier has skin a thick as steel!

#### Aftermath

In the end I wish I hadn't conceded because I failed to really test the German strategy, which was to attack every day **with no idle days**, and to buy as much infantry as possible. I regret it because I would have liked to see the ELR effect kick in (German ELR had already gone down to 3 after day 3 and, given the magnitude of the mods for days 4-6 it would have been down to ELR 0 by the end of the week.). The Germans seemed to think this was a trivial consideration and not worthy of another moments thought but I would have dearly loved to have tested it, especially since my purchases were designed to preserve ELR as best I could.

But congratulations must go to the victors, because if their strategy did have any effect it was to maximise my player fatigue and push me over the "player morale" edge and in that way they were successful. However.....



as always, Leni has the last laugh....

*For those of you unfamiliar with this film maker she was the number 1 Nazi propaganda madam for Hitler before and during the war years and subsequently was quickly disowned and ostracised by the relic German community, an ostracism that continues to this day. Many of the classic images we are familiar with, goosestepping storm troopers and blond fit young men doing their aerobics etc, were filmed by her. A career highlight for her was a film made on the 1936 Munich Olympics. She has continued her career and is today a respected film maker and artist although she had a set back recently after an aircraft accident in Africa last year.*



## SAGA ASL 2001 RETROSPECTIVE "THE MOTHER OF ALL TOURNAMENTS"

by Gordon McClelland

Only vaguely is there a recollection of receiving the virtual "Cooee" call in the middle of 2000 seeking organisers. And with a heady mix of bravado and vino (in unequal proportions), quickly followed by the click of a mouse, the die was cast. Soon however, the honour of volunteering to organise a major event like SAGA, gave way to trepidation, as the import of the task ahead became apparent.

It was only at turn of the millennium celebrations after being interrogated by three senior Bears as to the state of preparations for the SAGA ASL Tournament, that things began to happen. At the time the only answer was that the tournament would have a theme – "The Mother of all Tournaments". The theme was based on the idea that if an event is possible without Germans then it is equally possible that another event can occur with only Russians.

This then is the story of the how, why, what, where and who of this Mother.

I decided to keep the traditional five scenarios over three days format for the Tournament: 2,2,1. Martin Silvertown assisted me in my organisational duties and he also contributed to the action with Scenario D – "Point Peiper". So the details that follow are of the four scenarios that I designed.

For this tournament I resolved to do all research online. With only a few exceptions this proved to be true. By using the superior Google search engine I was able to locate obscure details and build up an understanding of the events in a potential scenario. As well there are a number of sites out there that have enough depth to be the one and only source for a scenario.



### Scenario A – “The Forgotten Hills”

This was originally intended to be a Japanese v Russian tank battle scenario. As it turned out there were a number of existing scenarios that dealt with tank battles in this pre-war period (i.e. the Khalkin Gol/Nomonhan Incident in 1939). Instead I focussed on the trouble at Lake Khasan in 1938 at which only the Russians had tanks.

The inspiration was an article at [vladivostok.com](http://vladivostok.com) titled “Myth and Reality of the Lake Khasan”, which written from the modern Russian viewpoint debunked the Soviet version of this battle. To get an idea of the terrain I viewed various Russian tourist and Provincial websites. 60 years after the event it appeared to be a very green vegetative rich area. So the initial design reflected this.

Using Board 9 was a fairly easy choice to reflect the hilly terrain. A special rule turned all crags into orchards to simulate the vegetation. In play testing it proved to be an interesting assault, which generally led to close combat at the end following a stealthy Russian advance behind the orchard screen. I was glad to have the first scenario in the bag.

Fortunately, there was a rare and difficult to obtain book titled: “Anatomy of a Small War”, by David Coox. My initial attempts to locate it had ended with only a parking fine at a university campus (another reason to do all research at home). Soon, however, one Bear revealed that he had this elusive book in his personal collection.

After reading the book and seeing the pictures taken during the conflict changes were required! The hills were hardly a garden – more like the moon. As the scenario was essentially finished the dilemma was history v playability. History won and the Crags became Crag, Woods became Brush and Alpine Hills were introduced.

It made for an exposed Russian attack requiring the attrition of the Japanese. To me this was the best of the four scenarios in the way it played.

Link: [http://vladivostok.com/rus\\_mag/eng/n\\_2/1art\\_has.htm](http://vladivostok.com/rus_mag/eng/n_2/1art_has.htm) (link inactive January 2002)

### Scenario B – “Summa Snow”

This is a revised scenario from the 1989 SAGA Tournament that was originally titled “Snow In Summa”. With application of new research the only thing that made it into the 2001 version was the picture.

This scenario is based wholly on materials at the most excellent Winter War website by Sami Korhonen - truly a treasure trove. The depth of detail is astounding. Admittedly the Finns didn't have too many but where else would you find a map showing the location of all bunkers and machineguns along a front?

After investigating the site a critical fact emerged – the Finns had very little AT weaponry. All they really had was the scary Molotov. The design tried to take this into account by introducing the special tank-hunting teams armed with special Molotov's.

Unfortunately after seeing the way it played out at the tournament the Finns were a little underdone. Maybe when Armies of Oblivion emerges some Klorrihatsi-like item (from Crescendo of Doom) may make a return giving the Finns some much needed AT capability.

Link: Winter War – <http://www.winterwar.com>

### Scenario C – “Roman Knight”

Of all the scenarios this was the one built on the slimmest of sources. A single paragraph on the Feldgrau website was the spur. It detailed the actions of a Romanian officer fleeing Stalingrad and winning the Knight's Cross in the process.

Details on the Romanian Army were gathered at the Dutch Helmet site and a request for information about the mystery officer was posted on their forum. So far there has been only one response and that from a Romanian who merely parroted the Feldgrau information.

This was a fast playing, small forces scenario set on a big map. The critical thing for the Romanians was to not set-up within range of any potential Human Wave – a mistake some made. The bonus Russians

get from an 8MF first turn is decisive. The Romanians must keep their distance until their Cavalry arrives.

If anyone has information on Major Gheorghe Rasconescu please let me know.

Link: [Feldgrau](http://www.feldgrau.com/romkc.html) - <http://www.feldgrau.com/romkc.html>

[Dutch Helmet](http://www.armata.home.ro) - <http://www.armata.home.ro>

### Scenario E – “Danzig Bleibt Deutsch”

Based on the “Memoirs of a Russian Tanker” at the PKKA-CA website. This unnamed Russian tanker saw quite a bit during the advance westwards.

For a tournament finale there is nothing better than a Russian-German street fight on Deluxe boards! Add the recollections of this tanker, which had flame-throwing men and tanks, Assault Guns, explosives and captured Panzerfausts – you’ve got the makings of a great scenario.

Unfortunately this did not happen. It was a walkover for the Russians (historical at least). Essentially it wasn’t play tested enough and the balance consequently was not there. Well after the playing’s at the tournament there was enough data to make the necessary changes.

So it comes back to oft-heard line at a tournament, “Half the skill is knowing what side to pick”. Though I think that is mainly used by scenario designers in the position I found myself in.

Link: <http://rkka.h1.ru/danzig.htm>

### The Venue

Due to some factional strife within SAGA the venue for the ASL component of the tournament was moved from the central Glebe area west to Canterbury Bowling Club.

While seemingly stuck in a time warp and generally austere, the Club had some advantages. There was close, plentiful parking, a canteen with homely

cooking, a bar with rarely a queue, and two gaming machines for those lacking control.

The main hall where the event took place was roomy and one could in a moment of quiet contemplation sit at the grand piano, beer in hand, staring at the stoic assemblage of ex-club Presidents picture framed on the wall and feel sure that at least one them had a connection to the events that we were portraying at our tables.

### The Results

Placings for SAGA ASL 2001 were:

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Paul Haseler 5-0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Paul Seage 3-2
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Andrew Rogers 3-2
Encouragement Award	Neil MacPherson

# CANCON 2002 AAR

by Paul Seage

Each year I look forward to CANCON as my escape from family responsibilities for a weekend of ASL action, good eating and nights out with the boys. However for me the fun doesn't start there as when Eric first sends out the scenario list around late December the mouth starts frothing and ASL enthusiasm comes to the fore. I usually take the time to have a good look at each scenario on my own including pulling out the boards and pottering around with set ups, attack routes and the like. Reading up on any oddball rule sections and any available AAR's is a pleasant and keenly pursued.

This year I really wanted to ensure I'd played each of the scenarios at least once before the tournament and so hastened to set aside sufficient play dates with nemesis David Longworth to make sure that happened. Of the 5 scenarios I'd played only 1 before so this was going to be an important process. In my opinion playing a scenario at least once increases your chance of victory by at least 50% in any subsequent playing simply by eliminating a strategy or two and most importantly enable you to get a feel for the pace of the game.

This is an underrated component of good play and having a good grasp of it will enable you to make the correct decisions on risk taking. Too often you see attacks that are too aggressive or too meek leading to excessive risk taking at the front end or back end of the game respectively. Even on the defence knowing how long you have to hold before falling back is important. Anyway, the practice games were played, opinions formed and strategies developed for each of the scenarios on attack and defence and away we went.

My first game this year was against the relative newbie Peter Manger in Zon with the Wind. Although ROAR has this pretty even after a couple of hundred playings I favoured the US fairly solidly as they have the troops to do the job and the ability to cop a few setbacks and still win.

I bid US2 in this scenario happy to allow one of the few German squads to set up HIP (US1) and also

allow the German to sub an MMG for one of their LMGs. I don't think the HIP helps a whole lot in this as the German needs every piece and can't afford to sit and hide waiting for a -2 shot. The MMG is a bit bigger sacrifice but what can I say - I still fancy the US as the Germans have the same number of squads to break. As it happens Peter seemed to be more comfortable on the defence and bid G0 so we ended up playing off scratch.

Peter defence was fairly up-front and held me for 3 turns but after that crumbled. When one of the 88s boxcarred its first shot the try line was open and the game essentially over. A number of players had 88s decimating the US infantry but I believe a careful attack avoiding the Guns which are usually revealed quite early (due to the HIP entrenchment rules) is very doable. Concentrate on breaking German infantry and then present the Guns with too many targets. (1-0)

Tretten in Flames was the second game up and in my opinion the least balanced off the stick. The Germans have more than enough bodies and plenty of options to get the job done with time being the only concern. Though I was keen to bid strongly for the Germans I was stymied when the G2 balance reduced the game length by 1/2 turn. This was a BIG balance as not only did the Germans have one last turn to run around seizing building from a disintegrated defender but the British got the last move to unleash a last ditch counterattack.

After some thought I considered this balance insurmountable and settled on G1 which upgraded a couple of the 2nd line Brits to 1st line which helps a little bit but is far from decisive. As it happens there were a couple of G2s bid but no one was capable of overcoming that handicap. Predictably my opponent Geoff Morris also bid G1 and alas I lost the dice for sides and it was the Sherwood Foresters for me.

I had some plans for the defence but Geoff rattled me by igniting one of the small buildings (by SSR) rather than the more obvious choices. Nevertheless I felt the defence was as good as I could manage and the couple of upgraded squads does help a bit. This game was extremely tense but 3 key events went my way.

Firstly the 150 had no smoke which slows the initial German turn slightly, secondly Gusts blew up and ignited the central woods mass in front of the rear line of buildings splitting the battlefield in two and

thirdly in his penultimate turn Geoff elected to stack his only two squads on the water flank and when I broke them I had the opportunity to steal back a couple of hexes. If that hadn't happened this would have really come down to the wire. Plenty of sweat here but take the tip - take the Germans and just keep the PzII out of trouble to avoid the CVP cap. (2-0).

Third game up was J42 Grebbe End against the wide roaming Kiwi Daryl Lundy. In the practice game for this I'd also decided the German attacker was favoured, not overwhelmingly but chiefly because everything depends on the Dutch 10-2 / HMG combo. A nasty sniper roll or MG breakdown can utterly ruin the Dutch - too many eggs in one basket for me.

I had no hesitation in bidding G3 for this as the balance provisions were quite light particularly beyond the G1 level (G1- Replace 8-1 with 8-0, G2- Reduce ELR to 3, G3 No vehicular abandonment). Daryl obviously fancies playing the defender and bid D0 so to my surprise we ended up playing off scratch.

This game ended up an easy victory with Daryl not only being blessed with the inferior side but also not the best luck either. Unfortunately on turn 2 Daryl exposed a little bit of cheater on my behalf as he pointed out that the Armoured Cars are actually trucks and shouldn't be cruising down gullies so e a s i l y . In addition I hadn't taken bog checks as they moved adjacent to some marsh either so it was a bit embarrassing. Amazingly I hadn't noticed it in the playtest game either. In the end I doubt it was too significant as it was always one of those games where Daryl couldn't take a trick - any trick.

As we finished quickly I had the chance to watch some other games in progress and was quite dismayed to see some very poor attacking strategies w i t h Germans approaching the death star piecemeal in dribs and drabs. There is plenty of time in this scenario so stay out of the way of the 10-2/HMG and then move decisively so that there are too many targets. If the HMG is in woods or building remember the CA restrictions!

I really believe the Dutch are short 1 leader in this

(maybe an 8-1) and feel this would really help balance it up. (3-0)

Catterns Position was the scenario for the 4th round of competition and I found myself up against Steve Banham. On first review of this scenario I was quite negative about it as it is pretty much a point blank fire / CC affair and doesn't have too many manoeuvre options.

After the practice game however I identified a number of subtleties that make it a bit more interesting, if chesslike, affair. A common theme in a number of observed playings of this scenario is the elimination of the Japanese onboard forces before turn 4 when the reinforcements arrive. These are then dealt with fairly easily with a resultant Australian victory. In fact this is what happened to Steve after I bid A1 (adding an 8+1 to the Jap reinforcements) to secure the Aussies!

I believe a real key to a Japanese victory in this is to conduct an up-front Japanese defence to ensure all the Japanese are activated and then execute a rapid withdrawal in a number of directions to split the attacking force. Terrain chokepoints must be used to minimise the number of eligible Australian approach hexes and the potency of advancing fire. By dividing the Aussies you give yourself a strong chance of obtaining a local superiority somewhere (due a CC result for instance) and from Turn 4 you can give yourself a chance to retake each of the victory hexes from a different direction.

Personally I like a Japanese defence on their right and fall back and loop around the Aussie attack. I really thought Eric did a good job with the balances on this one and that extra Jap leader which adds mobility to the reinforcements is enough, with shrewd play, to give them a reasonable chance. (4-0)

On to the final round where I took on Steve Linton in The Waterhole. A great little scenario this one though in my opinion too small for a final round. There are very few second chances in this. Interestingly ROAR has this one favouring the Japanese but my two playings (in one evening) both favoured the US.

My final thoughts were that a good upfront US defence with strong control left of the gully (from the Japanese perspective) made the Japanese work real hard under extreme time pressure to get the job done.

The fact that the US have the last turn in this and can steer the Japanese attack means that they not the attacker controls the game play in this scenario. I'd heard thought the grapevine that Steve fancied the Japanese in this so bid strategically J0 hoping he'd bid J1 and give me both the side I wanted and the balance!

Alas it was not to be as Steve bid J0 as well. Unfortunately I "won" the die roll for sides and ended up with the Japanese. Now both of us had our least favoured side! This was an unusual game in that as soon as sat down and saw Steve's set-up I was confident of a win. Rather than the "in your face defence" that I favoured Steve was allowing me onto the board without a fight and therefore allowing me to be very aggressive with reasonable assurance of minimum casualties.

Interestingly as the game progressed from these opening moves my confidence level started to drop as the dice were being particularly recalcitrant. Fortunately with one fateful die roll (US unsuccessfully rolling for radio contact) at the critical time the game swung and I was able to seize the waterhole and support it well.

Steve also made what I think is a very bad decision placing a foxhole in the waterhole victory location hex thereby admirably protecting my occupying infantry from IFT attacks. The US get the last move in this so should fortify around the 'hole rather than in it.

In terms of game play I really don't think Steve made any mistakes after the set up at all but lost this one before I'd moved a piece despite overall better dice. For those interested in a winners whinge I provide a performance appraisal on each of the Japanese support weapons.

MMG - Came on dm, was captured by the US, reassembled and K'd two Japanese squads  
Mtr1 - No smoke, No WP, 12 Malf, No repair  
Mtr2 - No smoke, No WP, Not one hit the whole game  
LMGs (both) - Initial and only shot fired as Firegroup, Roll 11, Yahtzee, 1 X'ed out, 1 never repaired.

But what the hell I won! Even after winning as the Japanese I still fancy the US in this. (5-0)

Well there we go, another Cancon came and went. With arch-nemesis The Editor grovelling his way into second place after an early defeat in the first round the placing from 2001 were reversed. Unfortunately NSW could not hang onto the State of Origin trophy for only the second time in recorded history as a small elite team from New Zealand did just enough to snatch it away. Overall we saw some very credible performances from the Canberrites who are improving slowly while those treacherous Vics are really on the slippery slide as their minds succumb to old age and bad weather.

Once again thanks to Eric for running a successful tournament - these days he really does have it well under control and was even seen to at least once during the tournament. My only criticism was that I felt the scenarios were just a little bit on the small side and didn't require too much combined arms skills. I am sympathetic to Eric's plight however as each round corpses were still seen dragging the chain and running over time. Until play speed generally picks up and those living dead amongst us learn to complete there games within allotted time frames Eric's hands are tied. Although adjudications are never pleasant the majority shouldn't suffer. Bigger scenarios next year please Eric!



# Nutz On The Net

## More ranting from the InternUt!!

CH fans: Why, why, why? I'm on ConsimWorld yesterday checking on the status on one of my former favorite games, Tobruk. Here's what I see when someone asks about the difficulty level of Tobruk: Kurt Martin - 03:05pm May 17, 2002 PST (#293 of 309) "Difficulty? Dangerous ground, but I would put Tobruk @ 6 now, with 10 being impossible/ASL/SFB - people seem able to play with just the charts in hand after the first couple of goes, so constantly referring to the rulebook (the worst part of detailed games) seems to be kept down. " Why o' why do you CH fans continue to let members of CH slam YOUR game to the 12,000 members of ConsimWorld? Isn't CH still a producer of ASL modules? Aren't ASL players BIG buyers of these modules? I would think that a producer of ASL modules would try and promote the game rather than trash it and refer to it as 'impossible'. The phrase "Don't bite the hand the feeds you" comes to mind here. If the ASL community is going to grow, we don't need publishers of ASL products slamming our game. This is not the first time it has happened and I've asked Kurt Martin to knock it off. Obviously, he isn't listening. Is Kurt Martin 'for' ASL and it's players, or against them? By his words, I think I know which side of the fence he is standing on. Maybe it's time some of the people who buy games from him to ask him politely to quit trashing ASL. Would a few of you please do this. Thank you. Robert 'Getting fed up with KM' Wolkey

Robert Wolkey wrote: >Why o' why do you CH fans continue to let members of CH slam YOUR game to >the 12,000 members of ConsimWorld? Isn't CH still a producer of ASL >modules? Aren't ASL players BIG buyers of these modules? I would think >that a producer of ASL modules would try and promote the game rather than >trash it and refer to it as 'impossible'. The phrase "Don't bite the hand >the feeds you" comes to mind here. Kurt Martin did not "slam" ASL. Saying that ASL or Star Fleet Battles has a difficulty of 10 on a scale of 1 to 10 is not slamming ASL (or SFB) by any reasonable definition. ASL \*is\* a very complex game and, as Kurt said, people often \*do\* have to refer to the rulebook frequently. Talk about being oversensitive.

At 11:39 PM 5/29/2002 -0500, Mark Pitcavage wrote: >Talk about being oversensitive. Sorry Mark you're several years too late and several dollars short of knowledge on this subject. KM has lied to the list, not dissembled, not mistakenly posted an "error", but out and out lied to the list in the past. That lie encompassed his trashing of ASL, and calling of another respected(don't get a swelled head, boy) a liar. So when he pops up again and even slightly takes a swipe at ASL, the old guard mans the barricades, we're sick of him and sick of the 'tude from CH. Never lie to us--ever--we never forget. For the nonce, ron acerbic curmudgeon and lowly priest in the High Holy Church of ASL

I guess Wolkey has his answer...deny, deny, deny... none are so blind as those that refuse to see! Calling ASL "impossible" IS a slam. Not only is it a slam, it is a lie! Over this last weekend I played 6 scenarios and watch another 20-30. The average "rules quest" was =< one per game. I have played A&A with more rules questioning than that in one session...does that mean A&A is "impossible"? Maybe ASL is "impossible" for some imbeciles. The worst part of this "effort" by CH minions is that it is so transparent. CH doesn't really want to produce ASL. They want to produce their own home- grown (HG) version (Squads & Leaders) which has a reduced risk of copy right infringement. But their HG version will never have a chance vs ASL as long as ASL remains so successful. The best way to kill ASL is for known Groggs to "bad mouth" it in an open forum. How many potential newbies say the word "impossible" associated with "ASL"...now the two terms are inextricable linked in their minds. Anyone who thinks this crap s not intentional is an idiot! On the "oversensitive" front. Yes, your damn right...I will always be "oversensitive" about ASL. Any ASL player who isn't has not really made the commitment to the game. I've spent the last 15+ years playing and studying ASL...spending thousands of dollars. So, your right, I am sensitive about what some agenda driven, no playtesting, brown nosing CH toady (i.e., KM) says about the greatest board wargame ever published! One question I have is...does KM actually ever play ASL anymore? Later- Tater (One Mean Spud!)

>BAM, nail on the head IMHO. I don't think Kurt

was trying to slam ASL, but >just manipulate the situation. He says ASL is impossible, a whole bunch of >guys chime in about how they play ASL (like you). Some new guys say, hey >how do I get into ASL, then Kurt sells them 'new and improved squads and >leaders'. OR Some new guy on his own gets it planted in his head that ASL >is impossible, and searches for alternatives....boom Squads and Leaders he >finds. Exactly. I got a private email asking me why I am trying to incite an anti-CH flamewar again. That is NOT my intention. We need another one of those like we need another IFT/IIFT war. They suck and no one is going to change a thing. I agree with Pete that there are some good CH product (G 48) out there, but it depends on the designer (Bob O'Connor). I just wanted to let you know that Kurt is up to his old tricks and it's time to shut him down again. I remember the saying about No one speaking up when the Nazis were taking over and now there was no one speaking up for me when it was my turn. Well, when Kurt tells potentially 12,000 members of C-World that ASL is impossible to play, I'm going to speak up. I choose to defend MY game, because in this day and age, SILENCE is agreement. CH is NOT the problem, Kurt Martin is. I'm only bring CH fans into this, because only they have enough pull to say "Kurt, shut the f\*ck up about ASL or I don't buy your designs." But, then you have an asshole like Paul Kenney who is so blind that he can't see the slam for what it is. He blindly rushes to the defense. Paul, let me ask you a question. When some newbies are looking at Beyond Valor or iASL and are considering buying it and they think, "Hmmm... a former designer of ASL scenarios and modules refers to it as impossible to play, why should I buy this?" Is that a good thing for ASL? Throw out CH, throw out MMP, throw out all the other crap, only concentrate on ASL. Is that a good thing for ASL? Robert Wolkey

Wolkster pondered: >> Paul, let me ask you a question. When some newbies are looking at Beyond Valor or iASL and are considering buying it and they think, "Hmmm... a former designer of ASL scenarios and modules refers to it as impossible to play, why should I buy this?" Is that a good thing for ASL? Throw out CH, throw out MMP, throw out all the other crap, only concentrate on ASL. Is that a good thing for ASL? >> If it causes the newbie to be screaming into the night then, yes it is a good thing. I got BV. I don't want iASL. And yes newb, ASL is impossible. You'll never figure it out. Give up! Send

your money to me. I'll teach you a good newbie game. Crokinole. Phlegm By the time you learn to play ASL you'll be ready to die and all the cool stuff has been published already and you won't be able to get it and your wife/SO will be pissed at you for taking up such a money pit hobby and the only one who will teach you is Wolk and he lives in some damn treehouse in Washington States Old Growth Forest.

First of all my name is Paul Kenny. Obviously you pay attention to detail. Of course you arent blindly running to be insulted! Perhaps you should get a life you sniveling little turd burger. > >Paul, let me ask you a question. When some newbies are looking at >Beyond>Valor or iASL and are considering buying it and they think, "Hmmm... >a>former designer of ASL scenarios and modules refers to it as >impossible >to>play, why should I buy this?" Is that a good thing for ASL? Throw >out >CH,>throw out MMP, throw out all the other crap, only concentrate on >ASL. >Is>that a good thing for ASL? >>>>>>>>>> hmmm is iASL offered for sale? or is that a detail you overlooked. I think the insignificance of what Kurt wrote cannot be overstated. I strongly suspect that comment will not in any way effect someones decision to buy ASL. Again you tiny brained wiper of other people's bottoms perhaps people will be intrigued into trying a very complicated game. Again, you scum thirsting stench trench, ASL IS complicated. Paul

Dude you are such a whining jerk. What is your mental disorder? Delusions of Persecution? Schizophrenia? Obviously you have serious social disfunction. Anyone who disagrees with you is immediatly insulted! God you have problems. Seriously get help. Talk to someone! Before you hurt yourself or others. Just because you see it that way, perhaps the problem is inside your small little mind. But knowing your past I am sure you wont be able to see it, guess that is the definition of insanity, kind of a Catch-22. So all I have to say is Die you gravy sucking pig! Love and Kisses. paul



## **Bear Meeting Dates for 2003**

**4th January**

**1st February**

**3rd March**

**5th April**

**3rd May**

**5th July**

**2nd August**

**6th September**

**4th October**

**1st November**

**6th December**

**Tournament Dates  
(approximate only)**

**CANCON  
25-27 January**

**ANZACON  
25-27 April**

**SAGA  
7-9 June**

**OctoBear  
11-12 October**